



Task Force B Meeting Summary

Monday, September 12, 2005

Participants: Jane Marshall (Chair) – Food Bank Council of Michigan, Alethia Carr – MI Department of Community Health, Diane Golzynski – MI Department of Community Health, Martha Gonzales-Cortes – MI Department of Human Services, Sherri King – MI Department of Community Health, Marla Moss – MI Department of Education, Barb Mutch – MSU Extension, Monica Myklebust – University of Michigan, Integrative Medicine Clinical Services, Terri Stangl – Center for Civil Justice, and Jan Williams – MI Department of Human Services.

Public: Gloria Zunker – MI Department of Education, Summer Food Service Program.

The second Task Force B: Improving Access to Fresh and Healthy Foods convened Monday, September 12, 2005 from 9:30am – 11:45am at Constitution Hall in Lansing. Council Member Jane Marshall chaired the meeting. Ms. Marshall called the meeting to order at 9:30am and welcomed the Task Force Participants and public to the second Task Force B Meeting. Those present introduced themselves. Ms. Marshall briefly reviewed the objectives and activities agreed upon during the first meeting.

Kristin Brooks, MFPC staff person, explained the recommendation process for the Task Forces and Council in general. The charge of the Council and in turn the Task Forces are to make policy and program recommendations to the Governor that improve the state's food system. Task Force B is responsible for developing, discussing and approving recommendations relating to access to fresh and healthy food for the Council's review. At each meeting there will be standing proposed recommendations to discuss and potentially approve as well as address new recommendations proposed by participants, other Council Members, presenters, or staff. Discussing and approving recommendations at each meeting will ensure that timely recommendations are reported to the Governor throughout the process.

Ms. Marshall then introduced the "Nourishing Michigan" report assembled by the Food Bank Council of Michigan. The report provides a comprehensive overview of federal and state food programs in Michigan including their economic impact, barriers, and recommendations. Participants who are most familiar with particular programs took turns going over the basics. First, Terri Stangl described the Food Assistance Program (FAP), more commonly known as food stamps. Approximately one in ten Michigan residents receive food stamps monthly and Michigan does have one of the highest participation rates of those eligible in the country at 65%. The high participation rate is largely due to categorical eligibility for working families and a geographic waiver, which extends the length of time benefits are eligible to adults between 18 and 49 years of age. The FAP is federally funded but funds are at risk in the upcoming budget talks for

the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The following was suggested as a result of this discussion:

- Develop a policy recommendation on the continuation of the geographic waiver and have MDHS develop options like transitional food stamps if categorical eligibility is cut in the federal budget negotiations.
- Develop a policy recommendation on an inter-agency collaboration between MI Dept. of Human Services, MI Dept. of Community Health, and MI Dept. of Education that creates a “universal access” portal and/or application for all federal and state implemented food assistance programs and other appropriate assistance programs. The following programs should be included: Food Assistance Program, WIC, School Breakfast and Lunch, Child Day Care, Medicaid, MI-Child, and Senior Congregate and Home-delivered Meals. (note – should MARS be used as a starting point - revamped to include joint applications, and promoted more heavily?)

Participants noted that some programs are linked already like FAP and School Lunch and Breakfast and the MiCAFE program (Michigan's Coordinated Access to Food for the Elderly) is a program in four counties that offers a simplified, on-line application for the FAP and other public benefits like Medicaid for seniors.

Also discussed was the concern that many U.S. children born to immigrant parents or living in non-English speaking households are not accessing the food assistance programs they are potentially eligible for. There are 780,000 households in Michigan in which English is not the primary language spoken. Participants did not think that access to food assistance programs were a particular focus of current migrant service outreach activities.

Next, Alethia Carr discussed the WIC (Women, Infant and Children) and Project FRESH programs. WIC is a statewide, federally funded food and nutrition assistance program and covers nearly half of all infants born in the state. WIC is administered by MDCH and local health departments are access points. Despite outreach efforts most participants largely learn of the program through word-of-mouth. At this time new fresh produce guidelines are being set for inclusion in the WIC food coupon packages. Participants recommended that the WIC guideline review be an opportunity to promote Michigan foods and that the Michigan Food Policy Council's Task Force D: Promoting Michigan Foods should investigate the issue.

The participants then discussed which issues they would like to address in future meetings. In the November meeting some time will be spent on the remaining programs in the “Nourishing Michigan” report as well as a presentation on urban gardens and farmers’ markets regarding health and access issues. In January, the summer food service program will be highlighted and the Food Assistance Program and food stamps in March.

The next Task Force B Meeting is **Monday, November 14, 2005** from 10:00am – 12noon, Constitution Hall, Hutchinson Room.